AFTERMATH

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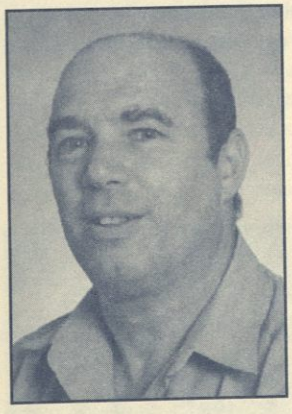
Whoever despises the high wisdom of mathematics nourishes himself on delusion and will never still the sophistic sciences whose only product is an eternal uproar.
Leonardo da Vinci

Faculty in Motion

The mathematics department bade farewell to **Dr. Vance Underhill**, who retired at the end of the spring semester after 35 years as a faculty member in Commerce. We estimate Vance taught over 5000 different students during that time. He started his mathematical career at Rice University, majoring in math (with a minor in German). He began working at ETSU in 1969 as an instructor, and finished up his PhD at UT-Austin in 1972. As a faculty member, Vance's versatility began immediately: by 1975, he'd taught 22 different courses (and just since fall 2000, Vance taught 13 different courses). Besides being able to teach a wide range of classes, Vance also displayed a renowned blackboard technique—clear, almost elegant (but rapid) writing, punctuated by the well-recognized cadence (a "tack-tack-tack") as chalk met blackboard. Once the spring semester was over, Vance promptly left the country—going on a delightful two-week excursion to Canada's beautiful Maritime Provinces. Luckily, we continue to see Vance around town. But we will miss his warmth, wit, and the clickety-click of the old typewriter (upon which he wrote those library reports).

The Department also bade farewell to **Dr. Karen Rhynard**, who—late in the summer—was made an offer too good to refuse. Karen was lured to an administrative mathematics position with Round Rock ISD (which also offered her husband a position). Karen will undoubtedly add much to her new employer, as she brings with her vast experience in K-12 education as well as higher education and teacher preparation.



We welcome a new faculty member, **Dr. Nikolay Sirakov**, who comes to us from Bulgaria (by way of Portugal, and Northern Arizona University). Nikolay's area of interest is in the interdisciplinary field of image processing, and he has a joint appointment with the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems. Nikolay will be also involved in developing undergraduate and graduate research. Nikolay's wife, Dora, a former swimming champion in her youth, ran her own private trading company back in Bulgaria, selling clothes in three shops. Their daughter Nona is a 9th grader in Commerce High School, is a budding mathematician and also swimmer (coached by her mother, in Rockwall). The Sirakovs reside in Commerce.

We also welcome back two "new" faculty and one semi-new faculty member: First, **Dr. Hasan Coskun** and **Dr. Charles Dorsett**, who both were *ad interim* faculty last year, are now each on tenure-track positions. **Hasan** works in the area of q-series, at the interface of algebra/number theory/combinatorics. He will soon give two invited talks in AMS Sectional Meetings in the Fall: "On Generalizations of Certain Well Known q-series Identities Associated to Root Systems" and "Elliptic Generalizations and Applications of Certain Important Summation and Transformation Identities for Multiple Hypergeometric Series". He plans to submit several papers for publication soon. Hasan plans to teach a course in mathematics in economics and finance soon. He reports that his wife and two children are now back from their summer trip to Turkey. **Charles**'s area of research is point-set topology. His wife, Ruth Ann, is working towards a Master's in Social Work. They live in Commerce. Both Charles and Hasan were introduced in last year's newsletter.

Lymeda Singleton has been hired as a full-time Instructor, after having served as an adjunct last year, and will focus on mathematics classes taken by first-year-students. Lymeda is married to Mike Singleton, Chief Financial Officer for Rockwall ISD. They have 4 children: Rob, a CPA for TXU; Kevin, a graduate student in Visualization Science at Texas A&M; Janet, a 5th grade math teacher for Rockwall ISD; and Laura, a senior middle-school math education major at Abilene Christian University. Lymeda taught math for the Abilene ISD public schools, St. John's Episcopal Schools (Abilene), and Abilene Christian University (18 years). She says "I am looking forward to working with the freshmen at A&M-Commerce through the Intermediate and College Algebra courses. It's also exciting to work with the future elementary and middle school teachers of this area in the math classes for elementary education majors."

Heidi Staebler has spent two years on leave at Illinois State University, where she is pursuing her doctorate in Mathematics Education. Heidi returned to Commerce for summer II and fall 2004. So what has she been doing?! Heidi happily passed her doctoral comprehensive exam and her dissertation proposal during the past spring and summer, and is now actively collecting data in conjunction with her pre-calculus class at A&M-Commerce for her dissertation, (investigating student problem posing as a pedagogical strategy from the teacher's perspective; she will present a poster session on preliminary problem-posing research at the North American Conference for the Psychology of Mathematics Education in Toronto, Canada in October). As a means of gaining practical classroom experience, during spring 2004 Heidi taught 7th grade mathematics four days a week and regularly co-taught 2nd grade mathematics at ISU's laboratory school.

The department also welcomed the following new graduate assistants: **Jackie Johnston, James Love**, and **Jane Smith** are teaching assistants, while **Rohit Baxi**, **Amal Chelapati**, and **Pullareddy Kudumula** are new graduate assistants (non-teaching). **Heather Burkham**, **Laverne Moxey** and **Krishna Yarlagadda** continue as teaching assistants from last year; **Leena Mandadapu** is a continuing graduate assistant (nonteaching). Adjuncts with us this fall are **Sandy Johnson** (an alumna with Bachelor's and Master's degrees from ETSU who returns to Commerce after a

Continued on page 2

Faculty in Motion—*continued from page 1*

teaching hiatus in California), **Jody Sheppard** (alumna now pursuing a doctorate in Secondary and Higher Education), **Robert McCormick** (recently retired from Raytheon), and **Charles Allen** (an alumnus, who works full-time at L3-Com and whose son is a student worker in our office). **Hoyle Julian** has (temporarily?) retired from teaching as an adjunct, and continues to give his time in assisting and observing prospective teachers (and maybe gets arm twisted into tutoring student athletes). Despite the best-efforts of Rick Kreminski, the department continues to be well-managed by **Kay Hatfield**. Kay's son and husband are both "back in school". After Wayne graduates from the Texoma Regional Police Academy, November 22 at Grayson County College, they leave for a drive to Fort Benning, Georgia, where son Matthew will graduate November 24, from Basic Training with the Army Reserves.

More Faculty-Related Updates

Books! Two of them! Dr. Italo Simonelli coauthored *Products Of Random Variables: Applications To Problems Of Physics and To Arithmetical Functions* (in the Pure and Applied Mathematics series of publisher Marcel Dekker) with a colleague at Temple University. **Dr. Rick Kreminski** coauthored *Applied Abstract Algebra* (Johns Hopkins University Press) with colleagues at the United States Naval Academy; it is currently the 2,114,908th best selling item at amazon.com.

Dr. Bill Aslan (who first arrived in Commerce in 1967) is beginning to talk about retirement, out loud, as something that may happen. There has been an innuendo or two from **John Davenport** about the same subject. John recently relocated to Rockwall and so now experiences the joys of 5-days-per-week commuting. **John Heath** has graduated his youngest son from high school. **Stuart Anderson** is enjoying teaching fulltime, but is as busy as ever. Stuart very deservedly received the Paul W. Barrus Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching this Spring, one of three campus-wide recipients. He continues very active work with the Mathematical Association of America.

Mathematics Clubs and Student Highlights

Pam Webster continues to oversee the Math Skills Center and the math clubs. Last year Pam initiated a new club for mathematics educators, in part related to the growing 4-8 mathematics program. The club, affiliated with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, supplements the long-standing Mathematical Association of America (MAA) student Chapter, the honorary Pi Mu Epsilon society, and the Alpha Gamma Alpha math club.

Alumni Updates

Dr. **Roy Streit** ('68) received a Master's in math at the University of Missouri in 1970 and a PhD from the University of Rhode Island in 1978, and is at the Naval Undersea Warfare Center in lovely Newport, Rhode Island. He also moonlights as an adjunct at URI and UMass-Dartmouth, and still is active in research in mathematics and applications in sonar signal processing. Dr. **J. Alan Yeakley** (BS, '86) received an MS in Environmental Science from UT-Dallas in 1988, and a PhD in Environmental Science from the University of Virginia in 1993, and is now an Associate Professor in Environmental Science at Portland State University in 2001. His main areas of research that might be of interest to mathematics faculty are applications of finite element and finite difference models to problems in watershed hydrology and element transport, and of statistical analyses of environmental data in general, including multivariate analyses and randomized intervention analyses, among other methods. He has numerous recent publications in journals such as *Ecosystems* and *Ecology*. His wife is an architect. Dr. L.L. **"Butch" Sloan** III, (MS '80) is assistant director of School Improvement at the Garland Independent School District and a Garland resident, and was honored last spring as our 2003-2004 Alumni Ambassador for the Department of Mathematics. **Steve Snyder** (BS '99) is self employed as Steve's Signs in Terrell. **Heather Higgins** (BS 2000) received an MS in Physical Therapy and works at East Texas Medical Center in Tyler. **Jeff Norris** (BS 1995, MS 1999) is Mathematics Coordinator for Paris Junior College at A&M-Commerce. He and his wife Amy are expecting their first child in the spring, a boy—with 51% probability. **Lucas Vaclavik** has begun graduate work in Applied Mathematics at the University of Maryland (College Park). Lucas graduated with highest honors last year, writing a thesis on coding theory (particularly spacetime codes) with Dr. Kreminski. Although she didn't think she would, **Jennifer Kornell** decided that she really likes teaching—and an actual income—and began full-time at Paris High School (while finishing up her master's in math). Both Lucas and Jennifer gave talks last fall based on their undergraduate research work at the Pathways to the Doctorate Research Symposium in Corpus Christi. We received a nice message from Gladys Giddens, regarding her husband **Richard Giddens**, Jr, who passed away 9.29.2001. After teaching junior high and band, he got his MA degree in Commerce (circa 1940). They had two sons over the years, while Richard served in the Navy and taught math to sailors in several places. After the war, he worked for the VA as chief of the accounting section of the VA hospital in Dallas, then moved to Washington DC, in part with the USDA, retiring at 59 as Senior Digital Computer Systems Analyst. They have traveled extensively, including cruising through the Panama Canal, visiting Australia, New Zealand, seven cruises down the Mississippi, various Caribbean cruises (and had taken their sons to every state in the US, including driving to Alaska in 1966 and visiting Hawaii in 1967). Ora Jane Johnson ('78, math and chemistry) recently celebrated 25 years at Raytheon in Garland, TX, and is currently a Senior Principal Software Engineer with honors. *Non-alumni who took a lot of math anyway*: **Donald Petty** ('60, as a chemistry major who took 8 math courses) reports that he taught math in Tehran, Iran, in 10th and 12th grades in 1974-1975 (before the fall of the Shah in 1979). He has worked in Research and Development at Dow Chemical Co., Anderson-Clayton Foods, Frito Lay and Line of Snacks consultants (the last of which Donald founded). He is the author of several books, and is a photographer, international speaker, and songwriter as well. **Darin Divinia** ('94, computer science) is still at yahoo!, and stressfully wrapping up his second Master's degree (MBA).

Departmental Grants

The mathematics department has received three year-long Teacher Quality Professional Development grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, primarily supporting instructional strategies for middle school mathematics teachers. Two projects are directed by **Dr. Vanessa Huse** (Maribeth McAnally is codirector) and support the Corsicana area, for a total of $159,975; the third project is directed by **Dr. Eileen Faulkenberry** (Dr. Rhynard was codirector) and supports the Commerce area for $79, 903. Heather Burkham is assisting with the Commerce project. For each grant, school teachers from across the region participated in a three-week summer workshop focusing on things such as rational numbers, algebraic thinking, proportional reasoning, measurement, and appropriate use of technology inside and outside the classroom. Participants continue to meet once a month during the school year to continue learning about these topics and how best to teach them to their middle school students.

Italo Simonelli Wins Statewide Teaching Award!

The students of Texas A&M-Commerce already knew that Italo Simonelli was a very good teacher. This past year, many people off-campus became aware of his teaching talents. Dr. Simonelli was named the 2004 recipient of the Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics Award. This is a state award given each year by the Texas Section of the Mathematical Association of America.

Dr. Simonelli was recognized on April 2, 2004 at a meeting of the Texas Section. He will be recognized again on April 16, 2005 when he delivers an invited address to that same group at the University of Texas at Arlington. Additionally, he will be the official Section candidate for the pool of Section winners from which the national recipients of the MAA Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Awards for Distinguished College or University Teaching of Mathematics will be selected. The Mathematics Department is proud to have a teacher of Dr. Simonelli's stature on its faculty. A citation detailing some of Dr. Simonelli's teaching traits and accomplishments can be found on the Texas Section MAA web site at: ***http://orgs.tamu-commerce.edu/maa/dta_ci04.html***. Congratulations to both Drs. Anderson and Simonelli on their teaching awards.

Previously Retired Faculty

Dr. Dale Bedgood and wife, Betty; **Dr. Archie Brock** and wife Lela; and **Dr. Howard Lambert** and wife Frieda all still reside in Commerce. **Dr. Jack Lamb** and wife Mildred still live in Belton. Dale had a full knee replacement done on August 5, 2004, and is recovering very well. His therapist told him that he made as much progress in 6 weeks as the average person does in 12 months. He attributes this to pre-operation exercising, as well as good post-operation therapy with and without the aid of a therapist. They have been limited in travel during the past year, except when Betty's father passed away in June and they made a trip to Georgia. They have some planned for 2005 though.

Archie and Lela have been very involved in caring for their grandson in Ft. Worth, who has some health problems. They recently returned from a trip to Virginia. They were able to visit with Virginia Taylor while they were there. She is the widow of Weldon (Bub) Taylor, who retired from teaching mathematics at East Texas State University in 1974. Howard and Frieda visited their son, Kirby, in Montana over the summer for about six weeks. They drive a pick-up truck and tow a trailer in which to eat and sleep. Since returning, they have purchased a new pick-up truck and a new trailer, so looks like there are other travel plans in the future. Jack Lamb and Mildred, have been staying busy with hobbies and community work. Mildred likes gardening, sewing, and making Afghans. Jack, of course, is still into space and astronomy, and maintains three websites for local organizations in Belton: the local Lions Club, the Methodist Church, and "Outreach" (a child-abuse assistance organization). He is working on another paper about the lottery with Robert Sughrue from Mary-Hardin Baylor University. They plan to attend an "elderhostel" in Flagstaff, Arizona, on October 17-20, where the prime focus is the Lowell Observatory.

Foundation and Scholarship news

The department continues to assist Janet Scott and Bill McAfee (class of 1938!) in hosting a regional Texas Math and Sciences Coaches Association math competition once a year, every January, on our campus. Net proceeds from the TMSCA event go directly into the William C. McAfee Mathematics Fund, which will be used to support department faculty in professional development projects.

Scholarships, created from and sustained by generous contributions of alumni and other friends of the mathematics department, have benefited uncountably many mathematics students over the years. Current (Fall 2004) students now being supported are:

- Jarrod Robinson, the **Cecil B. Wright Scholarship** for upper-level undergraduate students
- Steven Zandstra, the **W.W. "Bub" Taylor Scholarship** for mid-level students
- Tanya Chase, the **Dale and Betty Bedgood Scholarship**, unrestricted
- Alaina Gillick and Mark Ellerman, co-recipients of the **Rachel Lafferty Scholar Award**
- Sara Muelenbein is a **Lafferty Excellence** honoree.
- Krishna Yarlagadda, the **Dennis P. Grantham Scholarship** for graduate students

The scholarships listed above are awarded in the fall. To help spread out the opportunities, this coming spring the **Hoyle and Ann Oglesby Julian Scholarship** will be awarded to an outstanding first-year student; and the **Northeast Texas Community College Scholarship** will go to a deserving transfer student.

If you wish to make contributions to any of these funds, you may call the Department at 903.886.5157 or the A&M-Commerce Foundation at 903.886.5712

Let Us Hear From You

We would like to hear from all of our former students. Whether you used slide rules or calculators in the classroom, attended ET or A&M-Commerce, we are interested in what has happened in your life since you left campus. If you have a story about a favorite professor, we would like to hear that too. Please fill out the form below and return it to the Math Department so your information can be included in the next *Aftermath Newsletter*.

Name: _____

Address (for our files): _____

_____

City, State & Zip: _____

_____

Degree: _____

Year Graduated: _____

Email address: _____

Please list any promotions, career changes, achievements, awards, or personal news that you would like to share:

Interested in learning more about volunteer possibilities, such as "Recent alumni mentoring program" (RAMP), giving a guest lecture to a math class or math club, etc?

____ Sure, count me in! ____ Maybe later, not at this time

Send to the address below, or via email to
Richard_Kreminski@tamu-commerce.edu

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Homecoming Breakfast

The eighteenth annual Mathematics Homecoming Student/Alumni Breakfast will be held at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, October 30, 2004 in the Bluebonnet room of the Sam Rayburn Memorial Student Center. Please send in your reservations by October 27, 2004. The cost is $6.50 per person.

Name: _____

Address (for our files): _____

_____

City, State & Zip: _____

_____

Please reserve _____ places at the Homecoming Breakfast on October 30 @ $6.50 each.
Please return to:

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